



Travellers and their supporters celebrate after their eviction from Dale Farm was postponed by a High Court injunction. Council leader Tony Ball, right, addresses the press. LUCY YOUNG/GETTY



Activists celebrate a victory at Dale Farm – but for how long?

By Kevin Rawlinson

RESIDENTS HOLDING out against eviction from the UK's largest illegal Travellers' site won an 11th-hour reprieve after a High Court judge granted an injunction preventing buildings at Dale Farm from being dismantled.

The Travellers and their supporters chanted jubilantly as the news broke yesterday that bailiffs would not be entering Dale Farm. One said she hoped it would give them time to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights. "It is so good, it is a victory," said Richard Sheridan. Another resident, Kathleen McCarthy, said: "It's the best news I've heard all day."

A decision about the eviction will be taken at a hearing on Friday. Ms McCarthy said: "I'm not going to blow a trumpet but now the council might know that we're human beings and this is not proper, what they're doing."

The day had begun in hope rather than expectation, as already despondent residents and protesters put the finishing touches to their makeshift defences. Some attached themselves to barricades while others set up folding chairs behind the lines of defence guarding the front gates to the site, where they sat waiting for the clearance crews gathered outside.

Children sitting on the scaffolding sang songs "to keep up our spirits". Mr Sheridan, head of the Dale Farm Housing Association, said the residents were "ready for whoever comes in".

One was seen walking around with a golf club and others talked darkly of putting up a fight. But the bailiffs' vis-

Travellers who remained on site, and the similar number of supporters from outside the community who were at their side. Men in blue overcoats – flanked by police observers – approached the front gate and informed the occupants that some of the buildings were a safety hazard and they should leave voluntarily. Dean, who attached himself to the front gate early yesterday morning, said: "There is a symbolism to resistance in this way. We might not be able to resist them outright, but we can show that there are people that do care."

Emma, who attached herself to the gates by placing a bicycle D-lock around her neck, said she was not wor-

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ried about getting hurt. "It is all about putting your body on the line," she said. "Besides, if the bailiffs know I am here, they cannot try to open the gate."

Lawyers representing residents argued in the High Court that notices of eviction handed out by Basildon Council were not sound because they did not explain what could be removed from the site. On Sunday night, supporters made final preparations to keep out the bailiffs. Parties lasted late into the evening but the atmosphere was fatalistic. "Good morning," said one supporter as people began to gather the next day. "Is it?" came the reply.

Basildon Council said the Travellers who did not agree to move in to "bricks and mortar" accommodation would be required to settle on legal plots. But it also admitted there are not enough of them nearby to house all of those facing eviction and that it has "absolutely no plans to provide any more".

"We will keep moving them on until they find a proper site," said council leader Tony Ball when asked if the 200 Travellers living illegally at Dale Farm could stay on the roadside.

More trouble lies ahead at Dale Farm
Leading article, *Viewspaper*, page 4

CONSTANT AND CO: THE 'EVICION SPECIALISTS'

The whoops of joy from Travellers at Dale Farm late yesterday afternoon quickly turned into taunting of the bailiffs who had been standing by to evict them since early morning.

They work for Constant and Company, the Bedfordshire-based specialists charged with the task of clearing the site as part of a contract worth £2m.

"In the interests of health and safety, is there anything I can say or do that will persuade you to remove yourselves in an orderly manner?" Bryan Lecoche, the firm's managing director, asked travellers and activists.

The injunction granted yesterday by council officials until



dents what enforcement measures were proposed, on a plot-by-plot basis, after Mr Justice Edwards-Stuart expressed concern that measures "may go fur-

enforcement notices. Mr Justice Edwards-Stuart will consider extending the injunction at a hearing at 11.30am on Friday. It will then be up to Basildon Council whether to re-deploy Constant and Co. Founded in 1973 by former detective Bryan Constant, the firm has found itself in the spotlight over its controversial enforcement role. Mr Lecoche has made his views on Britain's travelling community clear in the past. In 2006 he told *The Economist*: "I've got nothing against travellers, they are our stock in trade, but... they don't pay income tax, they want everything for themselves without giving anything back."

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